**SAMPLE**

**Safety Manual**

**Section**

**Hearing Conservation Program**

**Revision 1.0**

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this program is to reduce occupational hearing loss per 29 CFR 1910.95 and California CCR §5097.

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# 1.0 Roles and Responsibilities

[ORGANIZATION] recognizes that protecting employee’s ability to hear is an important part of our responsibility. It is the Company’s policy that all employees participate in our hearing conservation program.

The [ORGANIZATION] [TITLE] shall be the administrator of the Hearing Conservation Program. They will be responsible for ensuring the program is meets all applicable standards, facilitate implementation, and coordinate program reviews as needed a minimum of annually.

[NAME OF PERSON] shall ensure the program is implemented in their areas of responsibility. The [TITLE] shall assist [TITLE] in the implementation of Hearing Conservation Program on a day-to-day basis. Managers and Supervisors shall implement the program within their department and shifts.

Team Members shall take part in required hearing conservation training, use company-provided approved hearing protection in designated high noise areas, request new hearing protection when needed and exercise proper care of issues hearing protection.

# 2.0 Hearing Conservation Training

Annual training in hearing conservation as required by CFR 1910.95 and California CCR §5097.

The training includes the use of videos/DVDs, slides, personal presentations, written brochure material, or a combination thereof. The training covers:

1. The effects of noise on hearing.
2. The purpose of hearing protectors, the advantages, disadvantages, and attenuation of various types, and instructions on selection, fitting, use, and care.
3. The purpose of audiometric testing, and an explanation of the test procedures.

All training will be documented in the training files.

**Contractor and Subcontractor Safety**

Contractors and Subcontractors must follow the [COMPANY] Hearing Conservation Program for their scope of work and shall be included in safety audits of the plant/location.

**Safety Incident Management Procedures**

Hazards related to noise and hearing conservation shall be identified by root-cause analysis. Hazards identified by this process are abated by controls (corrective actions).

# 3.0 Permissible Noise Levels

OSHA requires that plant facilities protect against the effects of noise exposure when the noise level exceeds those in the following chart when measured on the A scale of a standard sound level meter at slow response:

**Table 1.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Duration,**  **per day** | **Sound level, dBa** |
| 12 hrs | 82.1 |
| 10 hrs | 83.4 |
| 8 hrs | 90 |
| 6 hrs | 92 |
| 4 hrs | 95 |
| 3 hrs | 97 |
| 2 hrs | 100 |
| 1.5 hrs | 102 |
| 1 hrs | 105 |
| 0.5 hr | 110 |

OSHA also requires a hearing conservation program for employees whose noise exposures equal or exceed an 8-hour time-weighted average sound level (TWA) of 85 decibels measured on the A scale. It is important to note that for work shifts in excess of 8 hours, the 85 dBA TWA is reduced. For example, exposures in excess of 83.4 dBA for a 10-hour work shift and exposures in excess of 82.1 dBA for a 12 hour work shift necessitate inclusion in a hearing conservation program.

# 4.0 Noise Level Surveys

Each site will be surveyed upon completion of start-up and whenever a substantial amount of new equipment is installed or removed to determine if and where noise levels exceed values outlined in **Table 1.** The survey, which shall be conducted by the worker’s compensation carrier’s Loss Control Representative, shall involve site testing by use of a properly calibrated dosimeter and may include periodic monitoring of representative employees in various job classifications. A diagram of the survey results is provided in Appendix A and is posted on the bulletin board for employee notification when a new survey is conducted.

# 5.0 Designated Hearing Conservation Areas

Areas in which noise levels exceed 85 dBa are designated Hearing Protection Required areas. Entrances to these areas are posted “Hearing Protection Required in This Area” and employees working in the designated areas are required to wear suitable hearing protection at all times. Employees not wearing hearing protection are appropriately retrained and/or disciplined.

Hearing protection is required by all [ORGANIZATION NAME] employees, contractors, and visitors in the production area and when operating power hand tools anywhere in the plant. A diagram is provided in Appendix B.

# 6.0 Engineering and Administrative Controls

Where possible the company shall investigate and utilize appropriate engineering and administrative controls to control the noise level exposure of all employees. Where such administrative or engineering controls are not practical and/or cost effective, personal hearing protection shall be required.

# 7.0 Personal Protection Devices

Only ANSI-approved and well-maintained hearing protection devices are used in the plant. At least two choices of protection are available to employees required to wear such protection. The hearing protection selected for use attenuates noise sufficiently to keep the worker’s “real-world” exposure (i.e. the noise exposure at the worker’s ear when hearing protectors are worn) below 85 dBa as an 8-hr TWA.

Based on the NIOSH Publication No. 98-126 “Occupational Noise Exposure Revised Criteria 1998” the noise reduction rating (NRR) of hearing protection is derated as follows:

1. earmuffs-subtract 25% from the manufacturers’ labeled NRR
2. slow-recovery formable earplugs-subtract 50% from the manufacturers’ labeled NRR
3. all other earplugs-subtract 70% from the manufacturers’ labeled NRR

All employees and their supervisors will be trained in the care and use of personal protective equipment when the equipment is initially issued to the employee and annually thereafter.

# 8.0 Hearing Tests

## 8.1 Existing Employees

The Company will designate an outside vendor to conduct an annual hearing test for all employees. (At least 90% of all employees will be tested annually. An employee will not miss a hearing test two consecutive years.) All test results will be reviewed by an audiologist and will be compared to previous audiograms to determine if a Significant Threshold Shift (STS) has occurred. The results of the tests will be communicated in writing to the employees.

## 8.2 Ten dBa Significant Threshold Shift

If an audiogram indicates that an employee has a 10 dBa STS he/she will be retested within 30 days to either confirm or repeal the STS. An STS tracking chart is provided in Appendix C.

## 8.3 Recordable Significant Threshold Shift

If an audiogram indicates that an employee has a 10 dBa shift with an average exceeding 25 dBa it will be entered on the OSHA 300 log. The employee will be retested either within 30 days to either confirm or repeal the STS.

## 8.4 Repealed Significant Threshold Shift

If the retest repeals the STS the employee will be notified in writing. If the STS is 25 dBa, the entry on the OSHA 300 log will be “red-lined” out.

## 8.5 Confirmed Significant Threshold Shift

If the retest confirms the STS, the employee will be notified in writing within 21 days. The employee will also be evaluated by a specialist to determine work-relationship. If the STS is determined to be non work-related the employee will be notified and the report will be filed in the employee’s medical file.

If the STS is determined to be work-related the following steps will occur:

* Employees not using hearing protectors will be fitted with hearing protectors, trained in their use and care, and required to use them.
* Employees already using hearing protectors will be refitted and retrained in the use of hearing protectors and provided with hearing protectors offering greater attenuation if necessary. A chart is provided in Appendix C to track each years STS’s.

## 8.6 Prior To Testing

Employees will be notified by a posted sign of the need to wear hearing protection at work and to avoid high levels of non-occupational noise exposure during the 14-hour period immediately preceding the audiometric exam. An example of this notification is provided in Appendix D.

## 8.7 Terminated Employees

Employees will be requested to have an exit audiogram. Employees who refuse this test will be asked to sign a refusal form for documentation. An example of the letter & form is provided in Appendix E.

## 8.8 Record Retention

Employees’ tests will be retained at least seven years after the employee ceases employment or dies.

# 9.0 Employee Access

A copy of this Hearing Conservation Program is available in the [TITLE]’S office for review by employees and compliance agencies. Copies of any documents relating to the program, including hearing tests, must be requested in writing.

**Appendix A**

**Noise Level Survey**

**Appendix B**

**Hearing Conservation Area Diagram**

**Appendix C**

**STS Tracking Chart**

**STS TRACKING CHART**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Employee**  **Name** | **10 dBa**  **STS** | **25 dBa**  **STS** | **300 Log** | **Retest**  **Scheduled** | **Confirmed/**  **Repealed** | **Red-lined**  **300 log** | **Audiologic Exam Scheduled** | **Work**  **Relationship** | **Retraining/**  **Refitting** |
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**Appendix D**

**Annual Hearing Test Notification**

**ATTENTION**

**ALL SHIFTS**

**MANDATORY HEARING TESTS WILL BE CONDUCTED ON (insert date(s)) DURING YOUR SHIFT.**

**PLEASE AVOID NON-OCCUPATIONAL HIGH NOISE LEVELS AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE FOR THE 14 HOURS PRIOR TO YOUR SHIFT. ALSO, PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU WEAR YOUR HEARING PROTECTION IN THE PLANT. THIS WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH A MORE ACCURATE HEARING TEST.**

**SCHEDULE**

**(insert date(s) and time(s))**

**Appendix E**

**Exit Audiogram Notification**

Date

Employee Name

Employee Address

RE: Exit Audiogram

Dear Employee:

This letter is notifying you of your obligation to have an exit audiogram conducted in accordance with [ORGANIZATION]’s Hearing Conservation Program.

Please schedule an appointment at (insert clinic name and phone number) to have this test conducted within the next 30 days. There will be no cost to you for this appointment.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

[TITLE]

**Hearing Conservation Program**

##### Exit Audiogram

[ORGANIZATION]’s Hearing Conservation Program requires terminated employees to have an exit audiogram conducted. I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ understand this policy and refuse to have an audiogram conducted.

Terminated Employee Date

Company Representative Date